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Invictus Games 2014: A Medical Perspective

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It was the first-ever international adaptive athletics competition for wounded, ill or injured service members from 13 countries – from Afghanistan, to Germany, to New Zealand. The Invictus Games were modeled after the Warrior Games, the annual Paralympic-like event for wounded U.S. warriors, recently held in Colorado Springs, Colo.

I had the incredible honor of supporting the wounded warrior athletes participating in the **Invictus Games** in London this past September. It was the first-ever international adaptive athletics competition for wounded, ill or injured service members from 13 countries – from Afghanistan, to Germany, to New Zealand. The Invictus Games were modeled after the **Warrior Games**, the annual Paralympic-like event for wounded U.S. warriors, recently held in Colorado Springs, Colo.

The U.S. Invictus Games team included 100 active-duty and retired service members from all branches of the military – a truly unified effort. I

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served as the team physician; leading a group of medical personnel from all services. During the Warrior Games, the services battle one another for a spot on the medal podium, but, at the Invictus Games, we were one team with a common goal.

Each day, our medical team staffed a sick call clinic at the team hotel, and dispersed across the competition venues to provide sideline coverage. Additionally, we made a duty care provider available 24 hours a day by phone. As you might expect with overseas air travel to a sporting event, our athletes came to us with complaints ranging from congestion to sprained ankles. From offering cough remedies, to taping fingers for wheelchair-related sports, we provided a wide range of services.

Many of the athletes were recovering from bodily injuries, such as limb amputation from a war wound or severe accident. Many utilized prosthetics, and no matter how good the fit and function was, it often lead to asymmetric motion and soreness. Working alongside the British medical team, we addressed these issues with massage and osteopathic manipulation. Additionally, I was able to use **Battlefield Acupuncture**, placing needles in a specific set of ear points to relieve acute and chronic pain.



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process and have made great progress in attaining their new normal. Some have excelled in sport and are now competing regularly in national and international events. Others are in the very early stages of recovery. Several team members returned home at the conclusion of the games for additional chemotherapy treatment for cancer.

No matter what phase they're in, they all give huge amounts of credit to **adaptive sports** programs. When they first became ill or injured, many were isolated from their units and friends. If they transitioned out of military service, they were even further removed from the military environment. Sports allow them to return to a community that speaks a common language, and it helps them feel like part of a team once more. During the Invictus Games, I watched athletes from different services work together, teach each other, and become friends through sport. Truly inspirational!



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Perhaps most meaningful was the privilege of meeting and talking with many of the athletes competing in the games. All of these men and women have been wounded or injured in the line of duty; while deployed, during training, in an accident near home, or have been stricken with a severe illness. They are all in varied states of recovery. Some are very mature in the recovery

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